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Planning Graduate Programs Around Regional Problems Through the Establishment of Regional Research Centers in the Emerging State Colleges and Universities in the Cutover Area of Wisconsin, Minnesota, and Michigan. Final Report.

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In the Great Lakes Cutover Region, comprising the upper third of Michigan, Wisconsin, and Minnesota, there are 13 state colleges and universities that have evolved from normal schools into multi-purpose institutions with booming undergraduate enrollments and rapidly growing graduate programs. These institutions are situated at a great distance from adequate library facilities and need more experience in graduate instruction and research. This study was conducted to determine whether it was feasible to strengthen the institutions' graduate programs by orienting them around regional problems and topics, and by establishing centers of regional materials on each campus. There was strong administrative but little faculty support for such a project at 6 of the institutions. The Area Research Center (ARC), which is adjacent to a state college in Wisconsin, began with a small collection of regional documents and, following gradual expansion, entered into an agreement with the State Historical Society for the exchange of documentary materials. ARC has stimulated faculty research on regional topics and the writing of 160 undergraduate and graduate research papers. It was concluded that: graduate programs among these state institutions could be strengthened; if the 6 most interested institutions established programs, others would follow suit; and a 3-year program should be established. If successful, this method could serve as a model in other parts of the US. (WM)

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OFFICE OF EDUCATION

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March 6, 1969

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I. Summary

There are thirteen state colleges and universities (formerly normal schools and state teachers colleges) in the Great Lakes Cutover Region, the remote and troubled area in the northern part of Michigan, Wisconsin, and Minnesota. These colleges are growing fast, have become multi-purpose institutions, and are now moving into graduate programs. The purpose of this study was to study the possibility of converting their weaknesses (that is, remoteness from library centers, inexperience with graduate research, difficulty of recruiting and holding talented staff) into strength through orienting graduate programs around regional problems and topics.

The committee surveyed the institutional needs and interests, and decided that six of them had an interest in this approach. A committee composed of representatives of these institutions, the two historical societies, and the director then was formed. This committee made further surveys of library holdings, enrollment projections, and the possibility of establishing centers for area research materials on each campus; had bibliographical listings of various regional materials made; and proceeded to draw up a three-year plan

There is stronger administrative support than faculty for orienting graduate work around regional topics and problems. Consequently, the committee drew up a plan to attract faculty and graduate students into regional research by offering grants, and through building Area Research Centers that will offer not only public documents and other materials about an area close to a state college but also the source materials now in the state historical society collections, and also the possibility of exchange of these materials among all the participating institutions in the three states.

If successful, this method of strengthening graduate programs in the emerging state colleges and universities might well serve as a model in other parts of the nation where state colleges are moving into graduate programs.

II. Introduction

Background of the Study

The Great Lakes Cutover Region, comprising the upper third of Michigan, Wisconsin, and Minnesota where once the great white pine stand was the principal resource, has increasingly attracted national attention because of declining population, low income, and "brain drain." In this region there are thirteen state colleges and universities that have a common origin as normal schools, and have now evolved through the stages of State Teachers Colleges and State Colleges to multi-purpose institutions. In the great enrollment growth of the past decade or more, these colleges have become sizable institutions and are now moving rapidly into graduate programs. Their impact potential upon the region is considerable since they serve those who regard higher education as the avenue for social mobility, since nearly 50% of the graduates choose careers as teachers in the region, and since new graduate programs are emerging each year.

Purpose of the Study

The basic purpose was to determine whether these state colleges and universities might convert the weakness of remoteness from library collections, inexperience in graduate instruction, and the lack of a regional-oriented research and instructional program tradition to one of strength. Could a regionally oriented graduate program be stimulated through establishing centers of regional materials on each campus? Is there institutional interest in exploring such programs? Would the agencies who legally are responsible for public documents (the state historical societies) be interested in participating? It was believed that if a few of the institutions indicated interest and believed the project feasible that a request for U. S. Office support might properly ensue.

III. The Study

Methods

To make this study, an executive committee composed of the Project Director (Walker D. Wyman), the Director of the Minnesota Historical Society (Russell W. Fridley), the Associate Director of the State Historical Society of Wisconsin (Richard A. Erney), and the Director of the Area Research Center, Wisconsin State University-River Falls (James T. King) was formed. This committee or subcommittee visited the campus of each state college and university in the Great Lakes Cutover Region in the summer and fall of 1968. They met with administrative officers, department chairmen, and graduate faculty to discuss the problems of graduate study, of

recruitment and retention of faculty, of library resources, and then made a judgment as to whether the institution was sensitive to the basic problem. It was decided that six of the thirteen here had a strong interest--administrative and among certain faculty--in orienting some graduate programs toward the region served. It was believed that others might well follow suit in the years ahead.

Six state colleges were invited to send a representative to the Planning Committee. This committee made further surveys of projected enrollment (undergraduate and graduate), library holdings, legal problems of inter-institutional agreements, and then helped the Director in drawing up the three-year plan.

Both staff members and graduate assistants, working under the direction of the Minnesota Historical Society and the State Historical Society of Wisconsin, did the bibliographic research on regional materials in those institutions.

Findings

1. The state colleges and universities of the Great Lakes Cutover Region have booming undergraduate enrollments and rapidly growing graduate programs, but have limited holdings of library books and microfilm to support the program in the years ahead. All of them have new library plants and are committing increasing budget funds to support graduate programs.

(See table on following page)

2. The Area Research Center idea began as a means of saving county, township, and other public records adjacent to the state college at River Falls. It soon evolved into a depository of other materials, then into an archives for institution materials, then into an arrangement in which documentary materials of the State Historical Society could be made available at Wisconsin State University-River Falls, and vice versa. Over the years, the Area Research Center has stimulated the writing of approximately 160 undergraduate and graduate research papers in history, biology, and geography, and a number of faculty are pursuing research there on regional topics (History of the Chippewa Indians, political movements in northern Wisconsin counties, etc.) No doubt, these research materials and the arrangement for bringing State Historical Society holdings to Wisconsin State University-River Falls have encouraged research and helped hold young teacher-scholars. The ARC idea has been expanded to other colleges in Wisconsin, but the lack of research grants have prevented its full development.[2]

[2]Richard Erney's article "Wisconsin's Area Research Centers", reprinted from The American Archivist, Vol. 29, January 1966, reviews this Wisconsin experience. The article was distributed to the various committees in the Great Lakes Cutover Region colleges and universities.

Statistical Overview of Graduate Study Strength and Weakness

Institution	Library Holdings[1] 1965-66		Enrollment					
			Undergraduate		Graduate			
			Fall 1968-69	Projected 1972-73	1968-69		Projected 1972-73	
	Volumes	Microfilm			Full Time	Part Time	Full Time	Part Time
Moorhead State College	72,801	377	5,033	6,600	39	156	55	175
University of Minnesota-Duluth	106,735	1,209	4,898	7,000	130	20	160	35
Northern Michigan University	87,802	3,598	7,286	8,200	546		790	
Wisconsin State University-Superior	109,300	19,572	3,398	4,530	90	335	190	571
Wisconsin State University-Eau Claire	125,098	4,785	6,741	8,717	114	342	212	635
Wisconsin State University-River Falls	94,028	1,599	4,052	4,800	100	125	150	150

[1]Taken from Library Statistics...1965-66 (American Library Association, 1967).

The Area Research Center idea has been exported to Minnesota, and the Minnesota Historical Society has established one at a state college in that state. There is no such development in Michigan, nor is there a centralization of legal authority over public records as in Wisconsin and Minnesota. Northern Michigan University might well become a center for such materials and become a strong graduate center for that whole northern region. The Minnesota Historical Society and the State Historical Society of Wisconsin are agreeable to establishing centers in these colleges, providing them not only with public documents of the region but also the use of source materials from their holdings, and also to arrange a three-state legal agreement for the exchange of materials.

3. A survey of published materials (books, pamphlets, etc.) about the cutover region of Michigan and Wisconsin was made at the State Historical Society of Wisconsin. The material is fairly voluminous and presents problems of how to make it available to the regional research centers.

A survey of newspapers from the cutover area of Minnesota was compiled at the Minnesota Historical Society. This study indicates that at a modest cost microfilm of these sources can be made available to the area institutions.

4. There is stronger administrative support, in general, than graduate faculty support of regionally-oriented graduate programs. Many of the young faculty have not been involved with graduate instruction; some expect to move on to the institutions where great research resources are located; others feel thwarted by the lack of research materials in their state college libraries, but are eager to establish a regional research center. We believe that research grants, both academic year and the summer session, would be required to attract faculty in the several departments in the selection of regional topics and problems. Grants would also be needed for graduate students. Funds for purchase of regional materials would also be needed.

5. Since the Chippewa Indians inhabit the Great Lakes Cutover Region, and the education, especially graduate education, of their young people constitutes a special problem, we believe that the able students among them who are in the state colleges could be attracted into graduate study through an oral history of their people project, thus enriching their own graduate research program and the collection of materials for the Area Research Centers.

6. A conference held each year where graduate students and faculty read their papers and conduct seminars would encourage study of the region, and institutes on the region for teachers would contribute further to the overall program.

IV. Conclusions

It is feasible to strengthen graduate programs in the emerging state colleges and universities of the Great Lakes Cutover Region.

There are only six institutions in the region now ready to commit staff and resources to the project. The committee assumes that others may follow suit should the six establish such a program.

A three-year program should be established through federal and institutional funding to determine what might be achieved.

If successful, this method of strengthening graduate programs among the emerging state colleges and universities of the nation might well serve as a model.